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LEAP YEAR.

"What time is it, Madeline?" asked Gaffer Hitchcock, carefully folding the evening paper, and placing it on the stand.

The person addressed—a tall, slender woman about thirty-five—looked up from her knitting, and answered, with a pleasant smile:

"About half past eight, I believe," and rising, began to put away her work.

Gaffer's question had been for the last six years the signal for retiring to rest, and although it was fully an hour and a half before the usual hour, Madeline never thought for a moment of hesitating to obey.

"Something has occurred," she thought, "and he will tell me before long;" for Gaffer had looked at his watch at eight, at five minutes after, and at quarter past had changed his chair, and coughed uneasily, and now he asked, "What time is it?"

Madeline was the orphan daughter of an old schoolmate; Gaffer had taken her home with him when she was only ten years old, and his sister had cared for her with motherly solicitute until she was wooed and won by Frank Reynolds, and went to a distant city to live. Gaffer had made a terrible to-do about her marrying, called her an ungrateful good for-nothing, and declared it was proper punishment for taking her in the beginning; but, neverthless, spared no expense on the wedding trousseau. And when, about nine years after, she came back to her old home, widowed and childless, she was tenderly welcomed by the lonely man, for the grass waved over the grave of the good, true hearted sister.

For six years she kept house for him; cared for him, humored him, and made everything bend to his comfort as few daughters ever do. Lovers she had in plenty; those who would at any moment, have laid heart, fortune and hand at her feet; and when Gaffer heard that Madeline had refused them, he chuckled at their discomfiture, and smoothed her soft brown hair, telling her she was a good girl every way worthy of their love, only he knew that she never would leave him

He had grown so accustomed to seeing her happy, contented face by the opposite side of the fire, with some kind of work in her hands, that occupied neither brain nor attention, but left her always free to listen to him when he spoke, or play chess when the whim seized him, that he felt no fear at the attentions she received. He seldom spent an evening from home, unless Madeline was with him; and he had never left his native city since she came home. He was thinking of all this to night, as he watched her holding her work so carefully.

"What are you going to do, Madeline?" he asked, at last.

"Going to put my work away," she answered, simply.

"What are you putting it away for?"

"You asked me the time, and that is equivalent to saying I am tired of you, Madeline, go to bed."

"No it ain't," said Gaffer, gruffly, "come back here; I want to talk to you—there, do let that knitting work alone; what is that you are in such a hurry to finish?"

"Stockings," answered Madeline, sententiously; "stocking for Madeline Reynolds."

"Haven't you any more, that you are making such a fuss about this pair?"

"Yes, I have a pair on, I believe, and in case of emergency I could borrow of you."

Gaffer sat for a few moments in perfect silence; at last, with a violent effort and with the air of a man who has just made up his mind to have a tooth pulled, said:

"Maddy, I am going away."

"Going away?" she repeated; "where to, pray?"

The tone of surprise in which the question was asked fully satisfied Gaffer of the importance of the revelation.

"Yes; I am going to New York; Bonnehue is going to be married on New Year's day, and want's me to be groomsman. Who would have thought old Bonnehue would have got married at last; why, he's at least ten years older than I, and I am most fifty. You see, Maddy, child, your old bachelor friend is not too old to get married yet. Dreadful pity leap year is most over; here I am a hale, hearty man, in prime of life, with plenty of money to support a wife, and no wife forthcoming. But what makes you so quiet—don't you want me to go?"

"No," said Madeline, gravely, "I would rather you would not go; I had made different calculations for New Year's; in fact I rather think of getting married myself."

"Madeline, are you crazy?" and Gaffer fairly bounded in his chair with astonishment. "Why, what will become of the house? what will become of me? I'll starve, I know I shall!"

"You might live with me," remarked Maddy, in the same grave, business like tone.

"You know very well," said Gaffer, testily, "that I never could live with another man in the house; I should put him out before the honeymoon was over And who may the happy man be? some blind old dotard? some conceited dandy? some lame mendicant? some lazy vagabond, who sings love ditties to carry away Gaffer's money? or—or"

Gaffer did not stop for breath, but for lack of sufficient expressive words to convey detestation of the projected union

"No," said Madeline, "he is not blind, or lame, or seeking after your fortune." She hesitated for a moment, and then continued slowly. "He is neither very young or very old, very kind or very cross, very good or very bad, very rich or very poor—but I think he likes me."

"Of course he has told you so in most affecting tones; muttered Gaffer ironically.

"No," said she quietly, "he has not."

"Madeline are you crazy! or going into a dotage! Why did you not tell me that you were so anxious to get married? and I would have advertised in all the daily papers for 'a suitable lover, for a widow not very far advanced in life, well preserved, and anxious to leave Gaffer Hitchcock.' Why did you not tell me all this?" and his face clouded woefully. "It is too bad Maddy! I would never have believed you would go away again; it was bad enough to leave me when sister was here, but now, now, why Maddy! Maddy! think better of it—do, and don't leave me alone child."

Madelin's fingers worked nervously; how she longed for the knitting work! "Gaffer," she said, without looking up, "perhaps to morrow you will not feel so badly about it. It is no sudden thing, my determination to get married; I have thought about it for over a year, and yet last night I would have said there was no telling when the wedding would take place."

Poor Gaffer seemed perfectly undone at the news Madeline had imparted, but at her last words he stared from his seat, and drawing up a chair took a seat in front of her. "It is not too late then,' he said, his face radiant with hope "You can yet retreat; oh! by the memory of past days, by the solemn agreement I entered into with your father, to guard his little girl, by all the years I have loved and striven to serve you, do not leave me now; you know that it would be taking my life away to part with you;" he took the two cold hands in his. "Will you leave me? dare you leave me? still no answer? if you would be happier away from me, my dear girl, say so, and Gaffer will not say another word; speak, Maddy, speak; don't mind me."

The face of the woman was averted, but the words though soft and tremulous, were distinctly heard by the anxious man before her. "I never said I was going to leave you. If I ever marry again, it will be to be forever near you."

The look of anxiety of Gaffer's face gave place to one of bewilderment, and then utter astonishment. "Do you mean what you say?" he asked.

"I do, and it is for you to judge whether he is a blind old dotard, a conceited dandy, or after Gaffer's money."

Then Gaffer rose, walked across the room and took his old seat, picked up the evening paper, and asked, "what time is it?"

"Half past nine. Good night."

"Good night," he answered as if nothing had happened; and Madeline put the knitting in her work basket and left the room.

The next morning, at the usual hour, the bell was rung, and Gaffer walked down to the breakfast table, in dressing-gown and slippers to see Madeline arranging the cups and saucers in her own quiet, precise way! they talked very quietly together until Madeline asked, "When are you going to New York, Gaffer?"

"Not till after the first of the month; for I expect to be married on New Year' day myself."

There was little more said, and if Maddy ate little, Gaffer ate less. "Maddy," he said, when they had adjourned to the library, "you are a very sensible girl, and I never knew before last night that I needed a wife; but I am fifteen years older than you, and what will the world say?"

"You suit me," she answered, putting up her face for a kiss; "and we will not invite the 'world' to the wedding."

English Children.

The new born English aristocrat receives as soon as born a little bed with a hard mattress. From its earliest age it is taken, warmly wrapped, into the fresh air. After the first year its meals are reduced to three, and this rule is so unchangeable that no child thinks of requiring anything more; and from this time its food is of rich milk, and bread and butter, and good meat. After breakfast it remains several hours in the open air, and then sleeps. The whole afternoon is passed outside. From earliest childhood the children of the aristocracy wear short sleeves, and often the knee is left bare, though the extremeties are clothed in the warmest manner. At five years of age they begin to dance. Never are English children entrusted to the care of a young nursery maid, but to an elderly experienced person, under whose direction they constantly are. As soon as the young girl goes to school, the carriage of the head and shoulders becomes an object of attention, and under no circumstances is she permitted to sit otherwise than upright. "My child grows but once," says an English mother, "and therefore nothing is so important as her physical devevelopment. Everything else can be anquired later.

An English child rises at seven, breakfasts at eight, dines at one, sups at seven, and at nine o'clock goes to bed. Until twelve years of age they pass the greater part of the day in the open air, with only about four hours mental work. The young English aristocratic maiden dines first with her parents at eighteen years of age, when she leaves school and makes her *debut* in society. She is fresh and blooming as a rose, with light step and eyes beaming with pleasure and life Her frequent laugh displays her beautiful teeth, and her hair is rich and abundant. Note, for the first time, Violet displays the fine fulness of her contour. London possesses noble museums, galleries of art, and treasures of architecture, but one of the most charming of its sights may be seen on fine afternoons in Hyde Park—crowds of children merrily playing, earthly angels of incomparable beauty. A sight equally interesting may be witnessed after service on Sunday at the Foundling Hospital—several hundred children, ranging from five to thirteen years of age, of the most noble physique and absolutely bewildering beauty Two of the most wonderful sights of Europe are the children of England and the flowers of Paris. Both appear to have descended from Paradise, and scarcely to belong to earth. Nowhere else are seen such blooming maidens and children as in England. Of course the life of gay society undermines to some extent what the early training has accomplished; but the sensible physical edueation of the first years leaves permanent effects, and the English woman remains equal to the duties of life, and the requirements of wife and mother. If she does not remain perfectly well, she retains enough health to be ever beautiful. One sees in Great Britain ladies of sixty with complexions fairer than those of our youngest maidens, and whose hair, though slightly silvered, is yet abundant and handsome. Just as by the Greeks every trouble was taken to reach the highest beauty, so with the English aristocracy Many artists who have pilgrimaged half over the world assures us that the daughters of Albion surpass all others in the perfection of physique. Even in Europe the women of the best classes are not so healthy as the men, except, perhaps, in England.

Dr. Bock, Professor of Pathological Anatomy at the University of Leipsic, says: "A healthy man is a rarity; a healthy woman apparently does not exist." Yet it is possible that women may be and are, when they have the same training as strong men. I take this position boldly In England, even with the disadvantages of female dress, and where their physical education, though superior to that of any other country, is still inferior to that of the males, the women of the best classes appear to be as strong as the men of the same rank, for we must not compare the women of one class with the men of another. Who doubts this, let him station himself at the fashionable hours, in Hyde Park, and see on horseback or promenading these incomparable women.—Galaxy.

GENTLE WORDS TO HORSES.—The ridiculously loud tone of voice in which orders are generally given to horses when the driver desires them to start or stop, has often been a subject of surprise to me. If horses were next thing to deaf, there would be an excuse for the shoutings and yellings so generally indulged, but they are not and therefore need not be spoken to so loudly and harshly. The ear of a horse is very sensitive, and, save in exceptional cases, it is possible to control his motions by a command given in a moderate tone of voice, just as readily, and indeed, I think, more readily, than where this rough, rude manner is used.

A horse is a teachable animal, and is always affected by kind treatment. The fact of the matter is, that if kind words and gentle treatment throughout were given these noble animals, instead of oaths, curses and blows, we should find their docility greatly increased. Just imagine if you will, a gee! or whoa! uttered in a tone sufficiently loud to be heard at a half mile's distance, and this command given to an animal within five or ten feet of the party giving it. Wherein consists the necessity for it? Why not resort to more rational, and certainly more pleasing means? Why not speak in a moderate tone? This is all that is required. The horse, if not deaf, can hear it, and will as readily obey as if given in thundering tones.

One of the best managed teams I have ever seen was controlled by the driver without the indulgence of this unmusical yelling. The driver rarely ever spoke above his ordinary tone of voice, and yet his horses laid into their work with as much willingness, and apparently greater earnestness than if they had been driven to it by fearful shoutings and blows Let me appeal to the common sense of your readers in this particular direction. The horse is an intelligent animal. None of the brute creation more readily appreciated kind words and kind treatment Such facts should be considered always by those who have the care of these animals.—Correspondent Journal of the Farm.

When Moliere, the comic poet, died, the Archbishop of Paris would not let his body be buried in consecrated ground The king being informed of this, sent for the archbishop, and expostulated with him about it; but finding the prelate inflexibly obstinate, his majesty asked how many feet deep the consecrated ground reached. This question coming by surprise, the archbishop replied, "About eight." "Well," answered the king, "I find there is no getting the better of your scruples; therefore, let his grave be dug twelve feet deep, that's four feet below your consecrated ground, and let him be buried there."

On reaching Florence Station, on the Nashville and Chattanooga road, the other day, the conductor called out its name to the passengers inside the ladies' coach with much emphasis, when a young lady by that name from Winchester responded, "Yes, sir," and started toward him. The commotion this little incident occasioned among the passengers, and the blushes which crimsoned Miss Florence's face on discovering the mistake, can easily be imagined.

A Parson's Strategy.

The following is old—it belonged to the last generation—but it may be new to many at the present day: Old Parson Munson, of Worcester, used occasionally to be absent from his flock on missionary tours into distant states. Upon a certain summer Sabbath, having just returned from one of these excursions, he found his congregation quite drowsy, and for the purpose of waking them up broke off in the midst of his sermon, and began to tell them of what wonderful things he had seen in York state. Among other wonders he said he had there seen the largest mosquitoes it had ever been his fortune to fall in with—so large, in fact, that many of them would weigh a pound!

The good people were, by this time, wide awake.

"Yes," continued the parson; "and moreover, they have been known to climb up a tree, and bark!"

The congregation were sleepy no more on that day. On the day following, two of the deacons of the church waited upon Parson Munson, and informed him that the members of his parish were much scandalized by the big stories he had told them from the pulpit.

"What stories?" said the parson, with innocent surprise.

"Why, sir, you said that you had seen mosquitoes in York State that would weigh a pound."

"I said," returned the parson, explanatorily, 'that *many* of them would weigh a pound; and I do really think that a *great* many of them *would* weigh a pound."

"Well—but," continued the elder deacon, with a slight choking in his utterance, 'you said they had been known to climb up a tree and bark."

"Certainty," said the parson, with an assuring nod. "As to their climbing up on a tree, I have seen them do that here in Worcester county; havn't you, deacon?"

'O, yes I have seen 'em do that."

"Well, how could they climb a tree without climbing on the bark?"

The good deacons went their way with something very like a mosquitoe humming in their ears.

The Swiss Times has an account of three young ladies—Misses Murry—who have just made the ascent of Mont Blanc. Four sisters, with their brother, arrived at the Grands Mulets, accompanied by four guides. Continuing their ascent on the following day, they reached the grand plateau, when the youngest, 12 years of age, feeling fatigued, went back to the Grands Mulets. The three others, however, aged respectively 21, 17, and 14 years, continued their ascent, and arrived at the summit of Mont Blanc about midday. At nine o'clock in the evening they were again at Chamounix, where they were triumphantly received at the Hotel du Mont Blanc. Such an ascent, it is said, has not been made for several years.

"See ittle dackass, mamma, stan'in' all loney in the piesur!"

"Yes, dear."

"Nursey been tellin' Donney all about itty dackass. He hasn't any mamma to make him dood, an' no kind nursey's all. Poor itty dackass hasn't dot no Bidzet to dess him clean and nice, an' he hasn't any overtoat yike Donney's 't all. Oo setty, mamma?"

"Yes, dear."

"Poor itty dackass! Dot nobody 't all to turl his hair pretty, an' he hasn't dot no soos or tockies on his foots. Dot to yun an tick all day in e dirt. Tan't ever be put to sleep in his itty boddy 't all—

"Mamma!"

"What, Johnny?"

"I wiss I was a itty dackass!"

William S. is a teamster who is noted for keeping late hours, as he usually goes home at two o'clock in the morning. Well, one stormy night about a year ago William concluded to go home early, and accordingly he arrived at his house at just midnight. In answer to his knock his mother opened the window and inquired. "Who is there?"

"William," was the reply.

"No," said she, "you can't come that over me; my William won't be home for two hours yet.

Poor Bill had to wait till his usual time.

The natural history editor of the Lexington (Ky). Press tells this: "A lady residing in a city not a hundred miles from Lexington is the possessor of two pets—a monkey and a parrot—who are by no means congenial friends; in fact, Mrs. C. was in the habit of locking up the monkey whenever she left the house, for fear of his beligerent qualities One evening, alas! she neglected to do so, and the monkey coming in found the parrot ready for a fight, and a very desperate one ensued. The monkey ruthlessly pulled out every feather of the unfortunate parret, and broke up the mantel ornaments, and smashed things generally. When Mrs. C. returned she found the monkey chattering on the mantelpiece, and out crept the parret, looking deeply injured, and, greeted her with: 'We've had a hell of a time.' The appropriatness of the remark caused a shout of laughter."

A New York editor thinks from the manner in which shirts are made in that city there ought to be an inspection of sewing. He says he went to the expense of a new shirt the other day and found himself when he awoke in the morning crawling out between two of the shortest stitches.